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Real reasons that adjudicate typical man-woman relations in the novels of 20th century

Abstract: Socio-political conditions and many other factors along with literary atmosphere of 20TH century period can be studied especially in reference to man-woman relations as painted in the novels of this period. Impacts of the trends of a particular age cannot be ignored in the literature of that time; for it is a well identified fact that “the climate of doctrine and attitude that has so much to do with shaping the critical theories of a period is equally powerful in shaping the minds of novelists”(Mizener 3).

Twentieth century English literature is notable for the portrayal of truth and realities; even brutal realities of life and society. So it can be expected that the thematic genesis and characterization in the fiction are depended more on realism rather than on fancy. 20th century fiction in this context is not an exception; study of life is confined on an individual not on a particular community or on any specific group of people.

Keywords: Society, unexpected, immoral, legal, scientific, surrounding, trend, religious.

1. Introduction:

Twentieth century was an age of great socio-political and scientific turmoil like two world wars, rapid industrialization and revolutionary changes in religious doctrines. If we focus the

impacts of such changes only on British society, the results were “the emergence of a more or less egalitarian society, increased material well-being and moral confusion” (Trivedi 676). One of the major symptoms of such alteration was reduced validity of religious restrictions and “with the weakening of religious belief came the lowering of the standard of morality” (Sinha 63). The combined impact of decreased moral standard and cheapen religious bars resulted pre-marital and extra-marital relations between men and women that profoundly find space in fiction and short stories of 20th century literature.

The next change in respect of intimacy between men and women in that period was the “loosening in sex taboos and an increase in sexual promiscuity, for public opinion does not operate as a check in a crowd city” (Jayapalan 304). In the light of these changes it can be said that the novelists were certainly under such influences, for they abundantly project the same sort of relations.

The most eminent as well as efficient reason that brought intellectual revolution was Freud’s theories of psychology which directed thoughts and doctrines of people toward a field that was absolutely new. Few side effects of such theories were; damage to moral values and decrease of trust in conjugal connections. Following remark confines the impacts of Freud’s theories particularly on man-woman relations of that age:

The abnormal is no longer regarded as a sign of degeneracy, it is now recognized that even the normal are abnormal and neurotic to some extent.

This had a profound influence on 20th century moral attitudes especially in matters of sex. (305)

Furthermore, scientific inventions and theories generated new definitions and dimensions to man-women relations and also challenged old-established social and religious limitations.

“There is an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty, collapse of faith in the accepted pattern of social relationship and search for new”(307). The influence of such turmoil in literature was identified as bold and frequent treatment of sexual relations by the novelists of twentieth century. The impact of scientific progress in literature especially in the treatment of man-woman relationship can be visualized by this remark:

Subject matter itself was anti-materialistic, increasingly outspoken in sex, skeptical of Victorian commercial values, and of course, strongly influenced by new explorations in science and psychology. (Karl, Magalaner 5)

The discussion over woman conditions of that age depending on their social status; is also rational for the further elucidation of the impacts of socio-economic factors in contemporary novels. The economic conditions determined division of society. “Contemporary society guarded its sphere jealously, and admission to one section did not mean admission to all. It was a class conscious society”(Sinha 64). The economic situations shattered the conditions of women of upper and lower class. “The women of upper class and lower class had a happy time. They had plenty of leisure and ample means to amuse themselves. They generally did not need to work for their living. They were gradually achieving greater freedom”(67).

On the other hand women of lower class society faced advertise and they “were forced by circumstances, accepted jobs as companions of ladies and governess, their life was monotonous and dull”(67). Liza, the heroine of Maugham’s novel *Liza of Lambeth* represents this society. She works in a factory and Maugham’s delineation of the situations of the slum called Lambeth in just opening of the novel fully portrays the dull and monotonous life of slum dwellers.

2. Religious, Scientific and Legal Factors:

The common point in both the classes was the scarcity in religious faith and degeneration of morality in nuptial relations. There is a breakup of the old authoritarian pattern in family relationship, the assessment of the relative roles of the sexes has changed, women have come to their own and the notion of male superiority has suffered as serious blow.

Psychological awareness after Freud's theories along with scientific development crashed the concept of marriage institute. For the unification of men and women, the role of marriage decreased. Such sort of changes produced relations between opposite sex that were unauthentic in terms and conditions of pre-established ruled. "The question of marriage was put of microscopic scrutiny. The traditional concept that the marriage is the union of two souls and that the primary function of marriage is procreation, squarely challenged" (Sinha 77).

New legal rules of divorce were equally flexible for both men and women that brought severance in matrimonial relations. According to these new rules of divorce, "it was felt that if husband and wife were convinced of their incompatibility they should be allowed to divorce without humiliation and harassment and without the intervention of the church or the state"(78).

Thus with the emergence of new legal approvals for the divorce; marriage did not mean happiness and success of marriage was always under suspecting sight. Following remark clearly indicates to the data that belongs to unification of men and women through marriage after new legal rules of divorce passed:

Apart from a changed attitude towards marriage and divorce, there was a significant change in male and female approach towards getting married.

While it was the ambition of every girl in the preceding age to find a husband for herself, there was now an increase in the number of unmarried woman. (79)

For example in the novels of W.S. Maugham some minor women characters testify the aptness of above quoted remark. Liza's mother Mrs. Kemp in *Liza of Lambeth* does trust on men and marriage and Bertha's aunt Miss Ley in the novel *Mrs. Craddock* never marries throughout her life and it is only because she has lost trust in marriage institution.

The search of romance and sensual pleasure out of marital life was frequently observed in that age. Men and women helped by popularization of contraceptive devices which also encouraged pre-marital and extra-marital sex. It was to some extent an age which introduced the idea of experimental unsanctioned relations between the sexes.

If we examine stupendous novels of this period under the consideration of above point the thing to be observed is that loyalty and faithfulness between man and woman is very hard to trace. Thus it is safe to state that degraded moral value that was determined by variety of factors has its clear influence on the novels of this time spawn. There are innumerable novels of this period that display frequent invalid relations among men and women.

The combined impact of all previously elaborated factors is very keen on contemporary literature especially in the mode of the presentation of behavioural patterns of men and women. "Sexual renunciation has ceased to be the theme of literature, interest in sex perversion has grown and there is a free and frank discussion of sex. Victorian taboos on sex are no longer operative" (Jayapalan 305). The characters in these novels are "aimless, anti-heroic, and decadent"(Trivedi 677).

3. Influence of Political Unstability:

The impact of major political turmoil particularly of two world wars cannot be ignored in literature. The recovery from economical and emotional hazards was very hard that was caused by these two calamities. The influences of these catastrophes were very deeper to every human soul and mind. The impact of two world wars is obvious in contemporary fiction. After post

war period; the peculiarity in the presentation of men and women and their connections in fiction can be visualized by following remark:

After the First World War, however there was marked change in public attitude and presentation of sexual love became common, as may be seen in the novels of 20th century.(777)

The Razor's Edge was a novel that was composed during the Second World War period is the finest sample that reveals harsh effects of war in human mind. Larry Darrell's confused state, his firm belief in meaninglessness of life and anxiety to know the absolute are the exact images of every thoughtful and sensitive mind of that period. Though the war is not main theme of this novel yet calamities of war mould and direct the theme of man-woman relations. Larry's situation after war is just akin to Shakespeare's Macbeth, for in Larry's opinion too life becomes 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.' Larry Darrell's quest of self-realization in the novel The Razor's Edge is actually of every young man of that time; for twentieth century man was striving to gain a deeper knowledge of himself.

4. Conclusion:

Novels of this period deal with an individual of society not with the whole milieu to which he or she is related. It can be stated that there is no need for the reader to eat a whole sheep to be able to tell you what mutton tastes like; it is enough if he eats a cutlet. Though in these novels we can observe cosmopolitan settings yet in them novelist prefers to operate ups and downs of an individual's life. "This is of course, one minor external force operating among many to shape the novels of Conard, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Forster, Lawrence and Huxley"(Karl, Magalaner 5). The revelation of truth is a well-recognized feature of 20th Century fiction and it is right to state that the body of the novels has been a representation of the manners and the customs of the time. The social surrounding, people and the situations in which they are placed have realistic touch in fiction. It was a habit of writers to work with

living models that nourished literary value. The treatment with the fictional characters is so original that's why they are very worldly not merely tourists.

Authors like W.S. Maugham, Conrad, Joyce and Virginia Woolf had extra-ordinary skills to disclose complex human psyche and "the modern novelist had developed some new and eccentric techniques, he enjoyed greater freedom of expression in the treatment of sex" (Trivedi 774). Sexual stimulation or dementia with selfish motifs in man-woman relationship is the central point of discussion in the novels of these novelists and characterization in them is also perpendicular to specific socio-political features of that time. The result was that the novelists stood of course on different ground from his predecessors. No longer is a romantic hero possible which he manipulated a stable world that responded to his forceful will.

The disillusionment and hopelessness of human being is unravelled by Aldous Huxley, W.S. Maugham and Graham Green in their novels. Like Huxley's *Pointcounter Point* and Graham Green's *The Man Within* and *The Human Factor*, Maugham also projects the same theme in his novels like *Mrs. Craddock*, *Of Human Bondage* and *The Razor's Edge*. The realistic portrayal of the characters and their relations with the opposite sex; in the novels of that period was so true to life that modern men and women are supposed to be the authors of their own existence.

Most of the characters in 20th century fiction are not aware of their responsibilities to society; they are only clung into their personal difficulties; particularly in their relationship with the opposite sex. Inconvenient nuptial adjustments as well as aching non-marital relations between man and woman are chiefly explored by the novelists. Furthermore, the stupendous account of fiction can be synchronized to a particular phase depending on the theme of love or mode of relationship between man and woman; for concerning the problem of love in its endless variety- illicit love, degenerate love, vulgar intrigue and voluptuous, there are many questions to be asked, but few can be answered.

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